



Proposed H.B. No. 6939: An Act Concerning the Establishment of Municipal Cultural Districts

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Planning and Development Committee

February 13, 2019

Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Cassano, Senator Champagne, Representative Zaqistowski, and esteemed members of the Planning and Development Committee,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, a nonprofit service organization working to amplify, empower, and unite artists, creative organizations, and audiences for our region, which produces \$135 million in direct economic activity, supports 5,600 full time equivalent jobs, and attracts 700,000 attendees annually.¹

The Arts Council of Greater New Haven supports this proposal because we believe that establishing a statewide cultural districts designation will accelerate cross-sector collaboration and public private partnerships; attract new visitors, residents, and businesses; and celebrate the already high quality of life in Connecticut.

In fact, existing cultural districts and creative organizations in Connecticut will welcome this new designation; for example, the Arts Council of Greater New Haven was the founder of the nationally-recognized² Audubon Arts District in New Haven in the 1960s. Developing cultural districts places a collaborative spotlight on our creative assets, which are homegrown nonprofits and businesses that are permanently headquartered in

Connecticut. This proposal creates unique and limitless opportunities, as demonstrated last December when San Francisco received international attention for forming the world's first ever transgender cultural district.³

Please remember that although this proposal does not create any direct costs, successfully developing and managing this initiative is not totally revenue neutral for the public sector, both at the state and local levels. As such, I encourage the committee to leverage existing private partnerships, namely the Regional Service Organizations, a network of nine nonprofit arts councils designed by the CT Office of the Arts that collectively serve the creative sector in all of our cities and towns, but also the Council of Governments, Chambers of Commerce, and the CT Restaurant Association.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of H.B. 6939. I can be reached with any questions at Daniel@NewHavenArts.org or at 203-772-2788.

¹ [*Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences in the Greater New Haven Area*](#), Americans for the Arts (2017)

² [*Cultural Districts: The Arts as a Strategy for Revitalizing Our Cities*](#), Americans for the Arts (1997)

³ [*San Francisco Creates World's First Ever Transgender Cultural District*](#), Daily Beast (2018)

Additional Resource: [National Cultural Districts Exchange Toolkit](#), Americans for the Arts